



**Testimony Concerning SB 350**  
**“Early Childhood Development - Child Care Scholarship Program - Funding”**  
**Submitted to the House Ways & Means Committee**  
**March 29, 2023**

**Position: Favorable**

Maryland Family Network (MFN) strongly supports SB 350 as amended, which would add a reporting requirement in the event MSDE proposes negative alterations to the Child Care Scholarship Program (CCS). This will ensure that the General Assembly has an opportunity to review proposed CCS cuts, enrollment freezes, or wait lists prior to implementation.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and early childhood education, as well as other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on child care policy and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

CCS helps parents enter and remain in the workforce by subsidizing the high cost of child care. It gives parents and children access to licensed early education programs. In short, CCS keeps parents earning and children learning.

Current CCS program parameters are fully funded in the FY 2023 and FY 2024 budgets with a combination of General Funds and federal funds. This legislation will not change the program rates and levels that are already in place. As amended, this legislation does not establish an entitlement nor does it preclude future cost-containment measures within CCS, should they become necessary. It simply requires that the General Assembly be notified in advance of the imposition of such measures with sufficient time to review and take action, if it chooses.

Maryland families, children, and child care programs have endured several multi-year periods of CCS enrollment freezes and waiting lists since the early 1990s. In each case, these cost-containment measures were instituted, essentially unilaterally, by the agency responsible for administering CCS. The most recent enrollment freeze was imposed in 2011 and not fully lifted until 2018. At the high-water mark, more than 20,000 children languished on a CCS wait list. Meanwhile, in FY 16, FY 17, and FY 18, despite the lingering wait list, MSDE underspent available funding for CCS by more than \$55 million. (Source: *MFN analysis of Maryland Budget Books and DLS Budget Analyses*.)

(over)



As amended, SB 350 would not preclude the implementation of cost-containment measures should they become necessary in the future. The legislation would, however, ensure an opportunity for the General Assembly to review the proposed measures and possibly take action. This could help to limit the hardship and programmatic damage caused by prolonged enrollment freezes. It would add a level of accountability and oversight by elected officials and, one hopes, reduce the consequences of bureaucratic inertia.

For these reasons, MFN urges a favorable Committee report on SB 350.